

### Principles for the Integration of LA County Mental Health, Health Services and Public Health

The LA County Board of Supervisors recently approved in concept the consolidation of the Departments of Health Services (DHS), Public Health (DPH) and Mental Health (DMH) under a single health agency. LA's Community Clinics and Health Centers support integration of services and improved coordination of care for our County's most vulnerable patients. While the motion to consolidate the departments aims to improve integration, it does not guarantee it. Each department plays critical functions that impact the health and safety of the communities we serve, such as direct patient care or the timely inspection and licensing of community clinic facilities. Any consolidation must do no harm to the vulnerable communities that rely on Public Health, Mental Health and Health Services.

LA's Community Clinics and Health Centers have adopted the following principles for the planning and implementation of any proposed consolidation/integration.

- **Improved Integration as Primary Goal:** Improved integration of services and coordination of care for clients of *all three departments* and their partner agencies should be the primary goal of this endeavor. Parity among the three departments must be considered throughout the process.
  - **Service Integration:** Any action to consolidate or integrate services must demonstrate that it will improve and enhance service delivery, quality of care and consumer satisfaction for all three departments.
  - **Administrative Integration:** Any action to consolidate or integrate planning, business, and administrative functions must also demonstrate that it adds clear value (meaningful savings, administrative simplification and improvement in services) to each of the departments and their partner agencies.
- **Thoughtful and Measured Approach:** Integration holds great promise, but it isn't easy. Any plan to consolidate should not be rushed to meet an artificial deadline. Further, continued implementation of health reform and other critical initiatives currently underway should not take a back seat to the consolidation/integration efforts due to time or resource constraints.
  - **Planning:** LA County should allow sufficient time to not only engage stakeholders, but to also investigate appropriate models of integration and to ensure that any legal and operational issues are sufficiently addressed prior to implementation.
  - **Implementation:** Implementation of any changes as well should not be rushed. Thoughtful planning and rollout can save the County from avoidable problems further down the line. The County should consider phasing in any proposed consolidations to ensure the smoothest transition possible.
  - **Ongoing Monitoring:** Any plan to consolidate should have clearly defined objectives, along with a plan to evaluate and monitor progress toward those objectives.
- **Transparency & Stakeholder Engagement:** Each of the three Departments plays a critical role in the lives of countless LA residents and the many types of agencies that serve them. Stakeholders can provide vital input to ensure that integration is effective for all. Therefore, any consolidation must involve a robust public stakeholder process, including community mental health agencies, community clinics and health centers and other contracted community partners. Stakeholders must remain engaged throughout planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring.

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